

## The 'Burgers Disease' with all the extras thrown in...

I was overwhelmed with the phone calls I received after writing my article on the "Burgers Disease." Thank you to those who called and responded. Each of you has your own story, and each story is an inspiration as to how Autism affects not only our children, but we as mothers, fathers and our families. Your stories touched me deeply.

I had a lot of questions from those who called about what we do and what our school has done for our child with Asperger's.

Here is a list of things I think about every school year to help my son out:

The week before school starts, I call the school office and ask if our son can "tour" the school. The first day of school can be somewhat chaotic. The kids are so excited to see their friends and with everything the administration needs to get accomplished, we worry our son might get lost in the shuffle.

When he was in elementary, he got to go to his "new" room, meet his teacher, see where his desk was, his hook for hanging his bookbag and where he would put his gym shoes. He would look at the new picture schedule that was taped to his desk, and play with a few toys. He would then see if any painting or remodeling was done to the classrooms.

Now that he's in middle school, we still do the same only he "tours" his locker and homeroom. If his teachers are available, he stops in and says "hi." Instead of a picture schedule, he has a "planner." In the front of the planner is a schedule taped to it so he knows

every hour of the day what is coming up next. He uses the planner for his homework schedule and teachers can leave me notes, if there is something I need to address. This seems to keep him on track and ready to go for the next day.

After school, we give our son an hour to himself to do whatever makes him feel happy or relaxed. We figure since he's held it together for 8 hours of school, he deserves one hour to himself to wind down from his day. Then when I get home from work, he knows he needs to help with his chores or finish his homework.

Things that help our son is having a schedule and making him aware if the schedule is going to change. If your child is just starting out, ask your teacher about picture schedules. If you or your teacher knows there will be an assembly next week, tell him/her everyday about it. On class trips, they've allowed my son to be the unofficial timekeeper. He holds a schedule and lets them know when it's time to move on.

At home, we tape 2 school calendars to our kitchen door. One has the breakfast and lunch menu, and the second has what school activities are scheduled. Every morning our son looks at the calendar. He also looks up the weather online. That way if it's going to rain, he knows they will have PE and recess indoors (which provides for an exciting opportunity to play chicken tag!)

With the help of Joyce Wentworth, the Director of Student Services for the Yankton School District, I've come up with a list of

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